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Vietnam Service Medal

The armed forces' **Vietnam Service Medal** (at left in photo) was established by Executive Order 11231 from President Johnson's desk on 8 July 1965.

The distinctive design was the creation of sculptor Thomas Hudson Jones, a former employee of the Army's Institute of Heraldry.

The service medal was awarded to all members of the armed forces who service in Vietnam and contiguous waters and airspace between 3 July 1965 and 28 March 1973.

In addition, personnel serving in Thailand, Laos or Cambodia in direct support of operations in Vietnam during the same time period also were eligible for the medal.

To qualify for award of the VSM an individual must meet one of the following qualifications:



(1) Be attached to or regularly serve for 1 or more days with an organization participating in or directly supporting military operations.

(2) Be attached to or regularly serve for 1 or more days aboard a Naval vessel directly supporting military operations.

(3) Actually participate as a crewmember in one or more aerial flights into airspace above Vietnam and contiguous waters directly supporting military operations.

(4) Serve on temporary duty for 30 consecutive days or 60 nonconsecutive days in Vietnam or contiguous areas, except that time limit may be waived for personnel participating in actual combat operations.

Individuals qualified for the [Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal](#) for reason of service in Vietnam between 1 July 1958 and 3 July 1965 (inclusive) shall remain qualified for that medal. Upon request, any

such individual may be awarded the VSM instead of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal. No person will be entitled to both awards for Vietnam service.

Vietnam and contiguous waters, as used herein, is defined as an area which includes Vietnam and the water adjacent thereto within the following specified limits: From a point on the East Coast of Vietnam at the juncture of Vietnam with China southeastward to 21° N. Latitude, 108° 15' E. Longitude; thence, southward to 18° N. Latitude, 108° 15' E. Longitude; thence southeastward to 17° 30' N. Latitude, 111° E. Longitude; thence southward to 11° N. Latitude; 111° E. Longitude, thence southwestward to 7° N. Latitude, 105° E. Longitude; thence westward to 7° N. Latitude, 103° E. longitude, thence northward to 9° 30' N. Latitude, 103° E. Longitude, thence northeastward to 10° 15' N. Latitude, 104° 27' E. Longitude, thence northward to a point on the West Coast of Vietnam at the juncture of Vietnam with Cambodia.

There are a total of 17 campaign stars authorized for the Vietnam Service Medal. Personnel are authorized one bronze campaign star for each qualifying campaign with a silver star worn in lieu of five bronze stars.

The design of the medal's suspension ribbon reflects that of the flag of the former South Vietnam -- yellow with three red stripes. The green trim at the edges is suggestive of the jungle nature of the conflict.

At right in the photo is the Vietnam Campaign Medal, issued to eligible U.S. forces by the then-Republic of South Vietnam.

A listing of eligible periods of service is found in the [Navy Battle Streamer](#) section.

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